

**Town of Northfield**  
**2015 Community Development Strategy**  
*Updated and Adopted: January 2015*

**Overview**

The Town of Northfield is governed by over 100 volunteers who serve as elected or appointed members of various boards and committees. These individuals work with staff and residents to carry out the Town's community development and strategic planning efforts. The activities in the proposed Town's FY 2015 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for funding are consistent with the priorities and needs identified through local and regional community assessment and strategic planning processes, and with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles. This Community Development Strategy (CDS), including the prioritized list, was presented for public comment at a public informational meeting held on **December 16, 2014** and revised as a result of public input at the meeting. The Strategy was discussed and projects were prioritized at a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on **December 30, 2014**. The Strategy was updated, discussed, and adopted at a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on **January 6, 2015**.

**Community Planning Entities**

Northfield residents, through their involvement in a variety of local and regional planning efforts, help clarify and coordinate the Town's priorities. Needs assessments and community-based planning activities are conducted by the Agricultural Commission, Board of Health, Board of Library Trustees, Board of Selectmen, Board of Sewer Commissioners, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, Cultural Council, Energy Committee, Finance Committee, Historical Commission, Open Space Committee, Planning Board, Pioneer Valley Regional School District Committee, Northfield Elementary School Local Education Council, and Recreation Commission. Various specialized committees working under these municipal boards are also involved in needs identification and goal setting.

Northfield is assisted in its planning and community development efforts by several regional organizations including the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), the Franklin Community Development Corporation, the Franklin County Home Care Corporation, the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, the Franklin Regional Transit Authority, the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), FRCOG Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) program, and the FRCOG Economic Development District (EDD) Governing Board. Northfield residents serve as representatives to these and other organizations, carrying out local and regional planning initiatives.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts

Emergency Management Agency, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission also assist the Town, providing guidance and funding to help meet community needs.

### **Plan Identification and Implementation**

Community development projects are identified through a planning process that includes the solicitation of input at public meetings held by town boards, committees, and commissions. In April of 2014, The Town of Northfield completed, *“A Master Plan for Northfield.”* Projects have been identified and the need for the projects established. Project(s) implementation includes the identification of a timeline, potential sources of funding, if required, and the identification of who will complete the project (staff, volunteers, regional agency, consultant, etc.). In addition, the Town takes into consideration whether the projects are included in a local or a regional plan and the possibilities for collaboration among Town departments, boards, committees or commissions, or with neighboring communities.

### **Planning Process and Documents**

The Town of Northfield is involved in a variety of planning processes, as follows:

**Master Plan:** Northfield continues its process of refining its Master Plan. Most recently, Northfield undertook a Master Planning process in 2013 through 2014, and the ensuing report entitled: *A Master Plan for Northfield* was published. The previous Master Plan was created through a process that occurred between 1975 and 1977, and the report was entitled: *Pathway to Tomorrow, a Master Plan for Northfield*. In 1993, the Northfield Master Plan Review Committee reviewed and updated the Plan. The 2014 Master Plan was conducted by hired consultants and the Master Plan Roundtable, which was made up of interested residents and membership was open to all. The update process took one and a half years to conduct and many surveys and neighborhood meetings were held to ensure a high level of inclusiveness was achieved. Two committees now working to implement goals on the Master Plan: 1. Zoning Study Committee. 2. Town Park Committee.

**Community Development Plan (CDP):** The Northfield Community Development Committee, with assistance from the FRCOG, completed a comprehensive Community Development Plan in May 2003. This plan, developed under Executive Order 418, addresses four principal areas: open space and natural resources, housing, economic development, and transportation. The CDP uses the information collected and maps created to establish options and strategies for addressing future development. The Plan resources and Northfield’s character, reflects a vision for Northfield’s future, which is to:

- “Preserve the town’s character, special qualities, and natural resources;
- Address current development pressures through land use planning and zoning; and
- Support a more diverse mix of businesses and housing for residents, which will stabilize the tax base.”

**Open Space and Recreation Plan:** In June 2013, the Open Space and Recreation Committee, with the assistance of the FRCOG, completed an Open Space and Recreation Plan for the town. Over the course of a year, Northfield residents came together to identify

and prioritize Northfield's landscapes and ecosystems that are threatened by development pressures. The purpose of the Plan is to provide a framework for decisions dealing with land use, which may affect ecosystems and the lands that contain unique forest, agricultural, historical, recreational, and scenic values. The Five-Year Action Plan provides concrete substance to the goals and objectives, which were developed from the result of the 2013 Open Space and Recreation Planning Survey and from community members' understanding of their town's significant yet vulnerable natural and cultural resources base.

**ADA Transition Plan:** In 1999, with the help of *AccessPlus*, a program of the Stavros Center for Independent Living, Northfield adopted a plan to achieve compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The plan is updated regularly by the town's ADA coordinator with involvement from residents and municipal officials and actions to make town buildings ADA compliant are ongoing.

**Capital Planning:** Each year the Finance Committee coordinates citizen, board, and committee input into the Town's capital plan. The Plan projects the Town's major capital spending needs for five years into the future. The Building Utilization & Planning Committee identifies planning, space, and capital needs for the coming 10-15 years for each town building. The School Use Committee identifies and makes recommendations regarding capital projects at the elementary school. The Board of Selectmen and the Superintendent of Streets meet regularly to identify maintenance priorities for the Town's roadways.

**Northfield Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan:** With the assistance of the FRCOG, in July 2014, the Northfield Natural Hazards Mitigation Planning Committee completed a Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan. The Plan emphasizes protective actions that should be taken before natural disasters such as flooding, storms, high winds, hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, etc. occur. The Plan includes a mitigation program that addresses Northfield's unique geography, demography, economy, and land uses within the context of each specific potential natural hazard that may threaten the community.

**Planning for Results:** The Planning for Results process was developed by the Public Library Association as a tool for looking both at the community and at the library. In 2001, a Planning for Results Committee made up of residents from each of Northfield's five rural "neighborhoods" was formed. The ten-person committee met with representatives from the Library Trustees and staff to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Dickinson Memorial Library. The process provided the Library with the direction it needed to create a Long Range Plan compatible with the needs of the community. The plan created has expired and the Library Trustees are renewing this process in January, 2015.

**Annual Town Report:** Each year the Town produces an Annual Town Report that contains detailed information about town processes, highlights progress made on a number of community development and planning projects, and identifies needs and priorities related to town governance, community development, social services, and public safety. Reports

from various boards, committees, commissions and trustees are reviewed and accepted at each Annual Town Meeting.

### ***Regional Plans:***

Franklin County Regional Housing Study, 2014. This study conducted an analysis of affordable housing needs for Franklin County. It examined the specific affordable housing needs at a sub-regional level.

The Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2014 Annual Report. The CEDS program is operated by the FRCOG and guides economic development activities throughout Franklin County and neighboring communities. The program is directed by a committee of 35 business and community leaders.

Sustainable Franklin County – A Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, 2013. This long term plan examines the needs and issues the county will be facing over the next twenty years. It recommends policies and actions that the towns may take to make the region more sustainable. The Plan was completed after an extensive public participation outreach effort.

Regional Transportation Plan, 2012. This plan, coordinated by the FRCOG with input from all 26 towns, promotes ways to develop transportation alternatives to the automobile, while at the same time supporting the improvement and more efficient use of traditional facilities.

Emergency Response and Evacuation Planning and Mapping, 2012. This plan examined roads at risk of flooding and roads that were impacted by Tropical Storm Irene to understand the potential hazards in the event of future natural disasters.

Franklin County Bikeway Plan, 2009. This plan examined the state of bicycling in Franklin County and recommended on-road routes throughout the county that were suitable for bicyclists at varying levels of experience.

Regional Hazardous Materials Emergency Plan (HMEP), 2013. The HMEP was developed by the Franklin County Regional Emergency Planning Committee's (REPC) Planning Sub-Committee with support from the FRCOG Regional Preparedness Program. The HMEP includes: a hazard analysis for pre-event planning, standardized concept of operations for emergency response, institutionalization of protocols for needed local, state, and federal notification and a resource directory for emergency response.

### **Strategic Action Plan**

The planning processes described above were used to develop and update a comprehensive list of projects the Town intends to undertake between 2015 and 2018. This Community

Development Strategy, including the prioritized list, was presented for public comment at a public informational meeting held on **December 16, 2014** and revised as a result of public input at the meeting. The Strategy was discussed and adopted at a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on **January 6, 2015**.

The projects included in this Community Development Strategy demonstrate the Town's endorsement of the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles. At a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on November 13, 2007, the Board formally adopted the Sustainable Development Principles. Wherever possible, the Town will continue to incorporate the Sustainable Development Principles into plans and action steps.

The activities included in the following list of projects promote compact development, help preserve existing housing stock and implement recommendations from the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan, EO 418 Community Development Plan, ADA Transition Plan, Master Plan, and other town and regional plans. The projects reflect a focus on maintenance and improvement of existing town facilities, and infrastructure, a commitment to improving the economic conditions and quality of life for town residents and a dedication to conserving the town's natural resources.

## **Resources**

Northfield will address its community needs and priorities using a variety of local, regional, state, and national resources including:

- Local property taxes
- State aid through school programs, lottery funds, library programs, PILOT and special funds
- Technical assistance and grants from regional organizations including the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, FRCOG, HRA, and Franklin County Solid Waste Management Agency, and other state agencies.
- State grant and loan funding through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, and other federal agencies.
- Private foundations
- Volunteer labor and donated materials
- Community fundraising activities (book sales, auctions, etc.)

**Town of Northfield  
2014 Community Development Strategic Action Plan  
Prioritized Projects List**

| <i><b>Project</b></i>                | <i><b>Goal &amp; Task</b></i>   | <i><b>Funding Sources</b></i>  | <i><b>Timeline</b></i> | <i><b>Priority</b></i> | <i><b>Target Area</b></i> |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Housing Rehabilitation               | Correction of building code violations, lead paint removal, repairs to septic systems, through a no-interest deferred loan program. | CDBG funds   | On-going               | 1                      | Town-wide                 |
| Weatherization and Energy Efficiency | Work with HRA to provide energy conserving improvements for homeowners.   | CDBG funds   | On-going               | 1                      | Town-wide                 |
| Implement 2014 Master Plan           | Work towards the goals of the 2014 Master Plan as outlined in the Master Plan Element Summary Matrix                                | State funds<br>CPA<br>Grants<br>Town Funds<br>Conservation Grants<br>Historic grants | 2014-2024              | 1                      | Town-wide                 |
| Infrastructure Repair                | Infrastructure repairs to Routes 10 & 63  | State funds  | 2015                   | 1                      | Rtes 10 & 63 Corridor     |
| Town-Wide Emergency Management Needs | Upkeep of shelter supplies/ emergency preparedness; CodeRed emergency communications.   | EMPG/ME MA   | On-going               | 1                      | Town-wide                 |
| <i><b>Project</b></i>                | <i><b>Goal &amp; Task</b></i>   | <i><b>Funding Sources</b></i>  | <i><b>Timeline</b></i> | <i><b>Priority</b></i> | <i><b>Target Area</b></i> |
| Farmland Protection                  | Purchase APR's for the protection of prime farmland in Town along the Connecticut River.  | APR funds,<br>CPA funds,<br>Town funds<br>State funds                                | On-going               | 2                      | Connecticut River         |





| <i><b>Project</b></i>                      | <i><b>Goal &amp; Task</b></i>  | <i><b>Funding Sources</b></i>   | <i><b>Timeline</b></i> | <i><b>Priorit<br/>y</b></i> | <i><b>Target Area</b></i>    |
|--|--|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Elementary School                          | Undertake renovations to Northfield Elementary School.   | Town funds  | 2018                   | 1                           | Northfield Elementary School |
| Preserve and enhance Main Street character | Establish a Local Historic District, develop design guidelines, and/or update the existing zoning bylaw.   | Town funds, CPA funds   | 2016                   | 1                           | Main Street                  |
| Municipal Offices                          | Renovate Town Hall.  | Town funds, CPA funds, Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MHC) | On-Going               | 1                           | Town center                  |
| Senior Housing                             | Expand Squakeag Village for housing for the elderly.   | Town funds, state funds, federal grants or housing programs           | 2016-17                | 3                           | Town center                  |
| Recreation                                 | Develop a Community Park for all ages.   | Town funds, state funds, CPA funds                                    | 2016                   | 1                           | Town-wide                    |
| Recreation (cont.)                         | Redevelopment of the historic Schell Bridge (a walking bridge over the Connecticut River joining the two sides of the community).                  | MassDOT   | 2016-2020              | 2                           | River                        |
| Open Space & Recreation                    | Acquire Ames Property Conservation Restriction, also known as, “Alderbrook Meadows Sanctuary” for Open Space, Conservation and passive recreation. | Mt. Grace land Conservation Grant, CPA Funds, and Private Donations.  | 2015                   | 1                           | Ames Property                |
| <i><b>Project</b></i>                      | <i><b>Goal &amp; Task</b></i>  | <i><b>Funding</b></i>   | <i><b>Timeline</b></i> | <i><b>Priorit</b></i>       | <i><b>Target Area</b></i>    |

